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B A T M A N

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT

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Willie Schubert *letters* Chuck Kim *asst. editor* Archie Goodwin *editor*

Batman created by Bob Kane

HAM INQUISITOR

.....Seventy-Five Years of News for Gotham

WHO IS BATMAN OF GOTHAM?

DO YOU
BELIEVE THE CRAP
THEY PUT IN THE
PAPERS THESE
DAYS?

ALL
THIS BATMAN
HYSTERIA. WHAT A
CROCK.



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IF YOU WANT
HARD NEWS, MAYBE THE
GAZETTE WOULD BE MORE
TO YOUR LIKING,
GIMMONS?

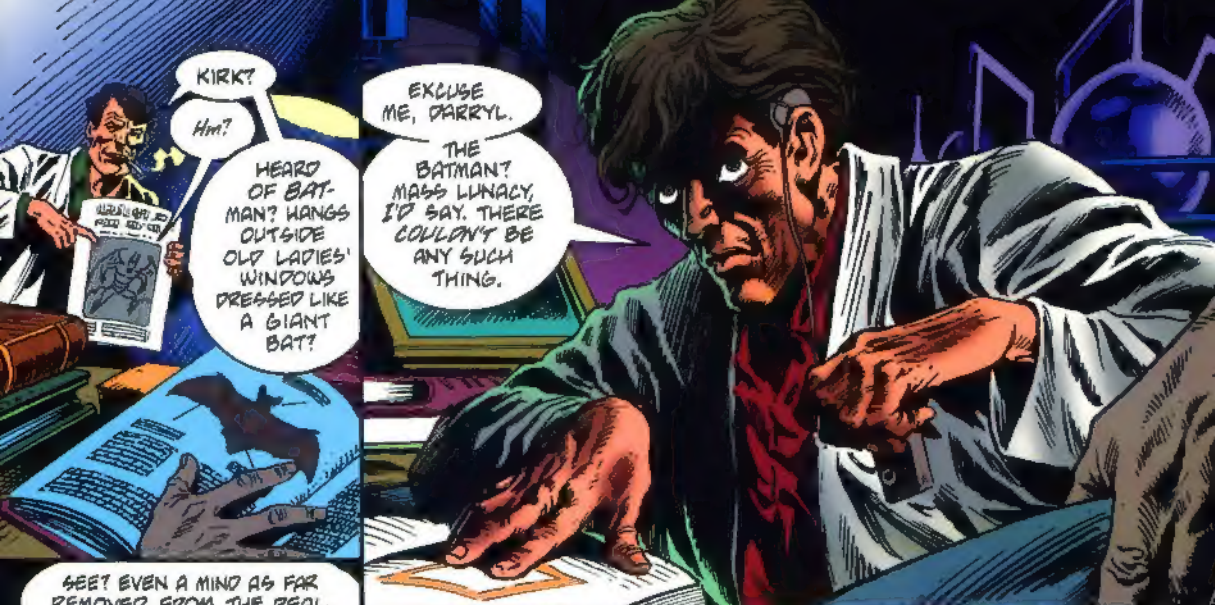
BUT THE
INQUIRATOR'S GOT A
BETTER SPORTS SECTION,
FELCHER.

I'M SICK
OF HEARING ABOUT
THIS BATMAN
GUY.



THE SAME PINHEADS
WHO BELIEVE THIS STUFF
BELIEVE IN FLYING SAUCER
ABDUCTIONS AND ELVIS
SIGHTINGS.

WHAT
DO YOU THINK OF
THIS BATMAN STUFF,
KIRK?



KIRK?

Hm?

HEARD OF BAT-
MAN? HANGS
OUTSIDE
OLD LADIES'
WINDOWS
DRESSED LIKE
A GIANT
BAT?

EXCUSE
ME, DARRYL.

THE
BATMAN?
MASS LUNACY,
I'D SAY. THERE
COULDN'T BE
ANY SUCH
THING.

SEET EVEN A MIND AS FAR
REMOVED FROM THE REAL
WORLD AS LANGSTROM'S--



--CAN
SEE THIS
BATMAN
BULL IS
JUST THAT.

GOD,
SIMMONS.
LEAVE KIRK
ALONE.

HA!



IT'S NOT
LIKE HE COULD
HEAR ME.

EVEN IF
HE WASN'T AS
DEAF AS A POST,
THE GUY'S ON
ANOTHER PLANET
WHEN HE'S
WORKING.

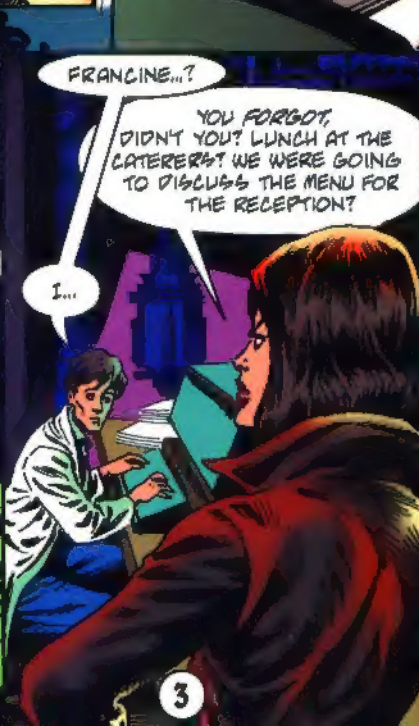
HE
BARELY NOTICES THE
WORLD AROUND
HIM.



HI, GUYS.
IS MY INTENDED
HIDING AROUND HERE
SOMEWHERE?

WELL, DOCTOR
FRANCINE LEE. YOUR
BOYFRIEND? THAT'S HIM
BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN
OF BOOKS.

KIRK?



FRANCINE...?

YOU FORGOT,
DIDN'T YOU? LUNCH AT THE
CATERER? WE WERE GOING
TO DISCUSS THE MENU FOR
THE RECEPTION?

I...



OH,
KIRK...

I'M SO
INVOLVED HERE. IT
SLIPPED MY MIND.
CAN'T WE MOVE
THE APPOINTMENT
TO ANOTHER
DAY?

I SUPPOSE
I COULD CALL AND
POSTPONE...



A full-page comic book illustration of Batman in his tactical suit and cape, standing amidst a chaotic scene of defeated henchmen. The henchmen are wearing blue jumpsuits and are lying on the ground, some with visible injuries. One henchman in the foreground is holding a wooden crate labeled "GLUBHAM FINANCE CORP." and a handgun. The background shows a city skyline at night with a bright orange and yellow sky, suggesting a fire or explosion. Batman is looking down at the henchmen with a determined expression.

Whatever the threat posed to them, they overcome it.

By strength.

By cunning.

By sheer force of will.

The bat has many talents.



Foremost is his tenaciousness in the hunt.

Next would be his ability to sense and avoid danger.



And his agility in the air; like an acrobat born to the night sky.





And the bat is territorial.

Once he claims an area, it is his for life.

He will return there night after night either by habit or design.



And everywhere within his nocturnal flight he claims as his.



A world of night known only to him.



In most corners
of the world he
is hated.



His world is one of
cloaked secrecy and
constant danger.

He is a
symbol of
fear.



Lies are told about
him to cover his
mysteries.

But in some places he
is worshipped.



And those mysteries
may be closer to
the truth.



But it is my
intent to
catalog those
mysteries.

To understand
what makes the
bat **UNIQUE** among
God's creations.



Not by observing
what can be seen by
the naked eye.

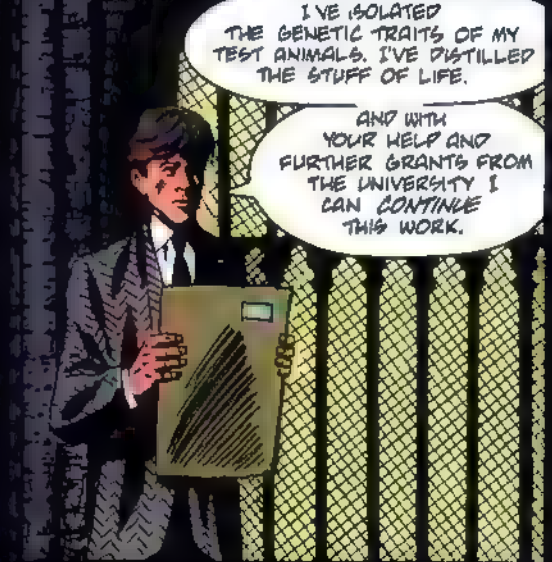


But by looking at
them on a
chromosomal level.

By unlocking the code
that gives them their
most **UNUSUAL** trait.

That is the **REAL** mystery
I've yet to plumb.





I'VE ISOLATED
THE GENETIC TRAITS OF MY
TEST ANIMALS. I'VE DISTILLED
THE STUFF OF LIFE.

AND WITH
YOUR HELP AND
FURTHER GRANTS FROM
THE UNIVERSITY I
CAN CONTINUE
THIS WORK.



I CAN WORK
BEYOND THE THEORY
STAGE

CRACKPOT
THEORY STAGE, DON'T
YOU MEAN?

VANDERMEER,
PLEASE..

YOUNG
MAN, YOU ARE
AN IDIOT.



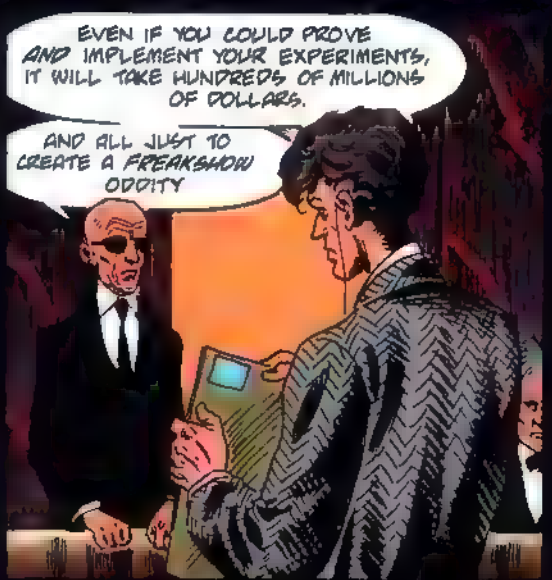
YOU MEAN TO
TAKE THE TALENT OF ONE
CREATURE AND TRANSFER
IT TO ANOTHER?

TO ISOLATE
THE FACTOR FROM ONE
SPECIES AND TRANSFER
IT TO A SECOND? TO
WHAT POSSIBLE
BENEFIT?



A FLYING
FIST? A CAT
THAT GLOWS
IN THE
DARK?

IT'S MORE
COMPLICATED
THAN THAT,
SIR..



EVEN IF YOU COULD PROVE
AND IMPLEMENT YOUR EXPERIMENTS,
IT WILL TAKE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS
OF DOLLARS.

AND ALL JUST TO
CREATE A FREAKSHOW
ODDITY



IT'S A BIT HARSH,
DOCTOR LANGSTROM. BUT THE
UNIVERSITY IS RATHER
TIGHT THESE--

I
UNDERSTAND,
DOCTOR
FIELDS. GOOD
AFTERNOON

With a new challenge
comes a new approach
to the fight.

SOME
ADDITIONAL
PERMUTATION
TO YOUR
COSTUMING,
MASTER
BRUCE?

THE RIDGERUNNERS
HAVE GOTTEN AWAY FROM
ME THREE TIMES. I HAVE
TO DEVELOP SOMETHING
THAT WILL ALLOW ME
TO PURSUE
THEM.

THEY BAGGED
NEARLY A MILLION IN
CASH IN THE GOTHAM FINANCE
JOB. THEY'RE LAUGHING AT
ME, ALFRED.

HEAVEN
FORFEND, SIR.

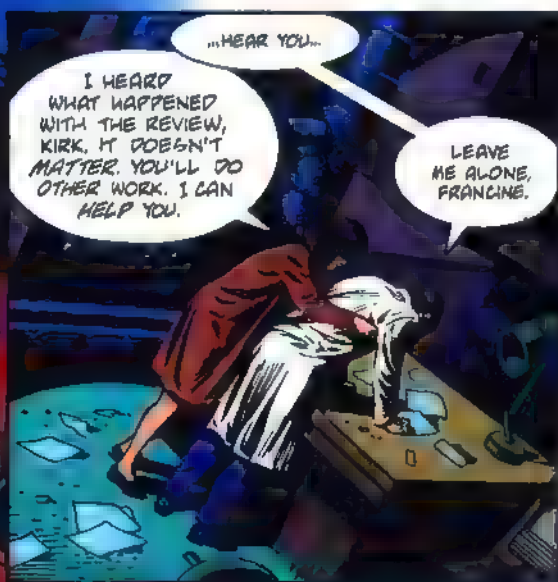
BUT
NEXT TIME
I'LL NAIL
THEM.

WITH THIS
DEVELOPMENT MY
TRANSFORMATION
IS COMPLETE.

Now the playing field
is level.

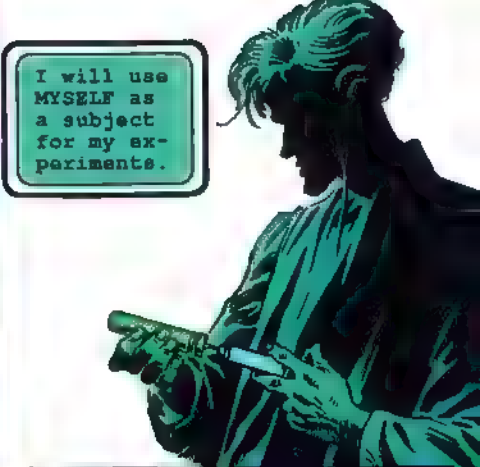
■
COMPLETE
TRANSFORMATION
OR MENTAL
COLLAPSE.

WHICH-
EVER ARRIVES
FIRST, SIR





In gratitude to this institution of higher learning I decide to save the university millions of dollars.



I will use MYSELF as a subject for my experiments.



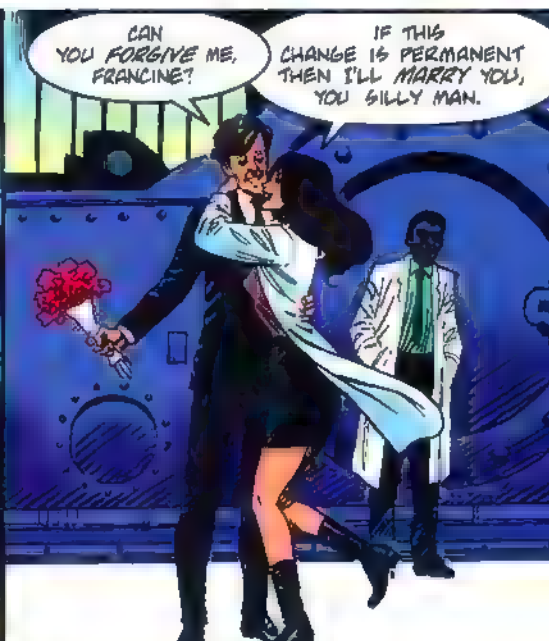
I will show them that my theories aren't idle speculation.



I'll show the bastards.



I awoken to a tapping sound.





I'M
NOT SO SURE
YOU SHOULD HAVE
DONE THIS,
KIRK.

HOW CAN
YOU SAY THAT? IT
WORKED. MY HEARING
IS BETTER THAN
I HAD EVER
HOPED.

I'VE
REVERSED THE
GENETIC ANOMALY
THAT MADE ME
DEAF.

IT'S A WHOLE NEW
WORLD FOR ME; FOR BOTH
OF US. I WOULD HAVE LOST
ALL MY HEARING
EVENTUALLY.

NOW
YOU WON'T
HAVE
TO BE
ASHAMED
OF ME.

YOU
IDIOT..

I COULD NEVER BE
ASHAMED OF YOU.

I CAN
LISTEN FOR BOTH
OF US.

HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA!

WELL, I
MEAN IT, YOU JERK!

LET'S GO
OUT.

WHERE?

ANYWHERE.
I WANT TO HEAR
THE CITY.



KIRK IT'S
RAINING.

AND I
CAN HEAR EVERY
DROP HITTING EVERY
FILTHY ROOF IN
THIS TOWN.



AND A BABY CRYING.
HEAR THAT. IT'S CRYING FOR ITS
MOTHER. IT'S STOPPED. IT'S ALL
RIGHT NOW...huh?

I...DIDN'T
HEAR IT. THE
NOISE OF THE
TRAFFIC...



AND
THERE. HIGH
ABOVE US.

A
RUSTLE OF
CLOTH. OR
LEATHER.



WHAT
COULD THAT
BE?

LET'S
GO INSIDE,
KIRK.



I've been searching for them for weeks

They're cocky this time

They beat the cops and they beat me.



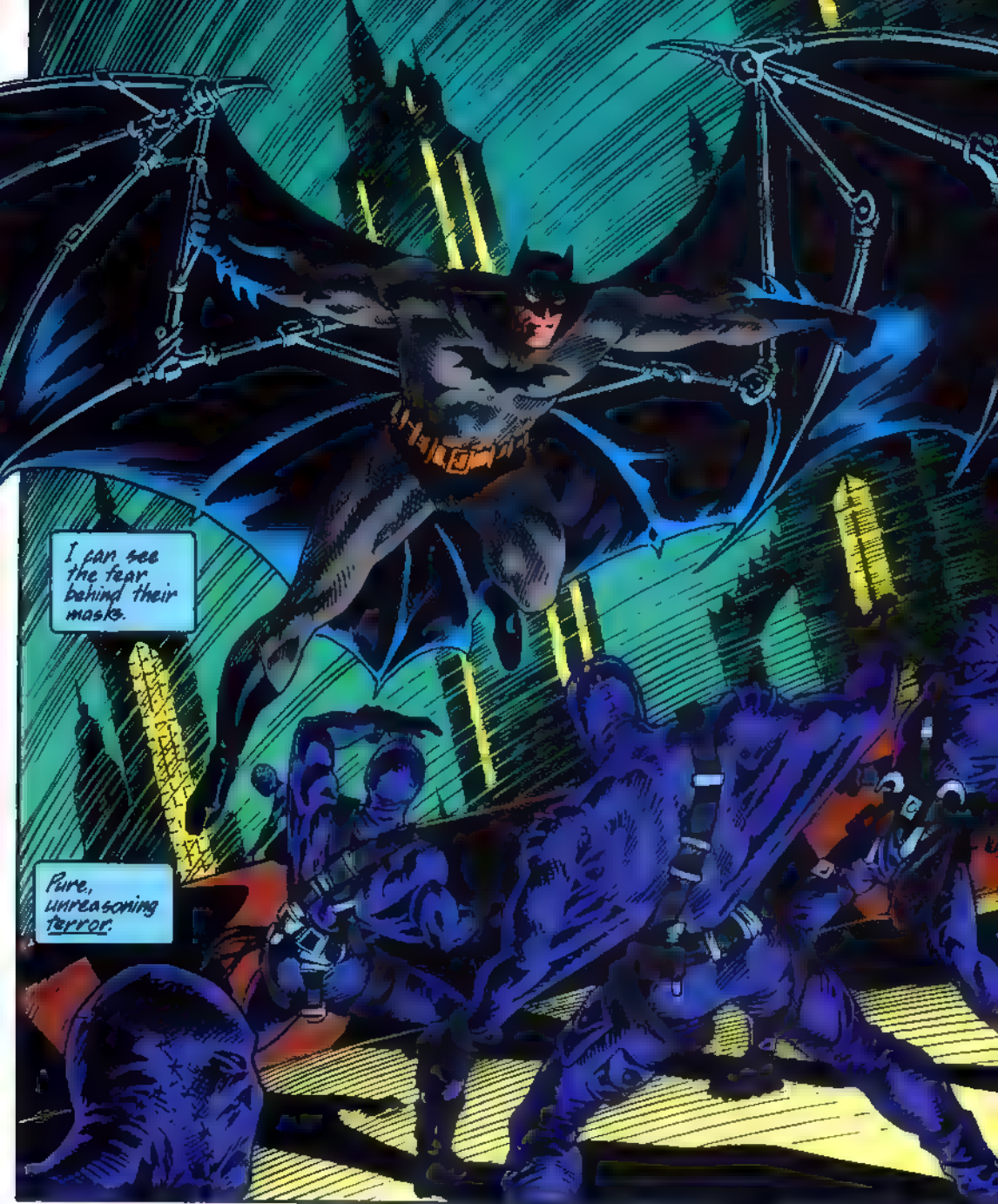
But not tonight



Tonight I better beat their game

OH...

...MAN...



*I can see
the fear
behind their
masks.*

*Pure,
unreasonable
terror.*

*My greatest
weapon*



*I feel an exhilaration as
their fear mounts.*

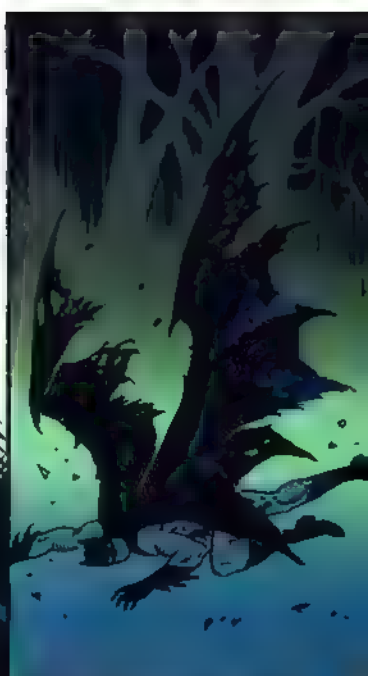
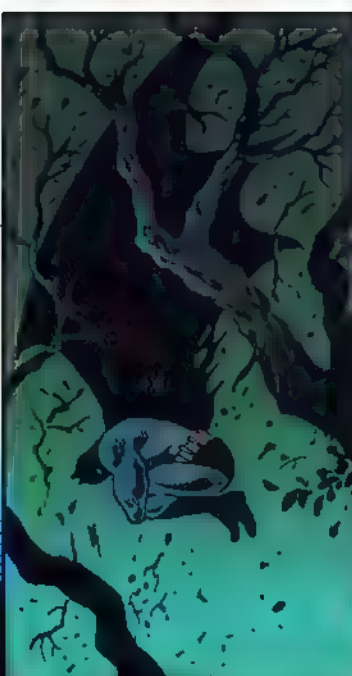
*The night wind whispers past
and I feel an elation...*

*...and an overconfidence
bordering on conceit.*



*And what I dread
most of all is what
Alfred will have to
say about all this.*

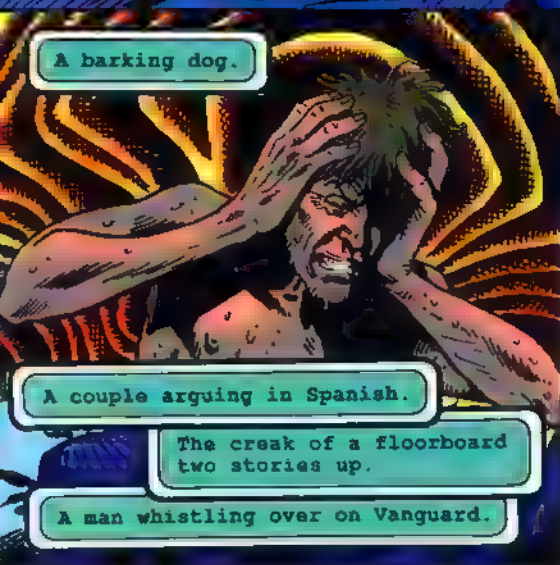




Sounds.

The city comes alive
in my ears.

A car horn.



A barking dog.

A couple arguing in Spanish.

The creak of a floorboard
two stories up.

A man whistling over on Vanguard.



What have I done
to myself?



KIRK,
ARE YOU
THERE?

I
TRIED
TO CALL
FIRST.



GO AWAY, FRANCINE...

I HAVEN'T
HEARD FROM YOU.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN
TO WORK...

WHAT'S
WRONG WITH YOUR
VOICE? ARE YOU
SICK?



**GO
AWAY!**



KIRK!

**KIRK
LET ME
HELP!**

Francine can't
help me.

No one can
help me.



My only hope
is the use of the
university's lab.



But I can't go there
like this.

The transformation proceeds every day.

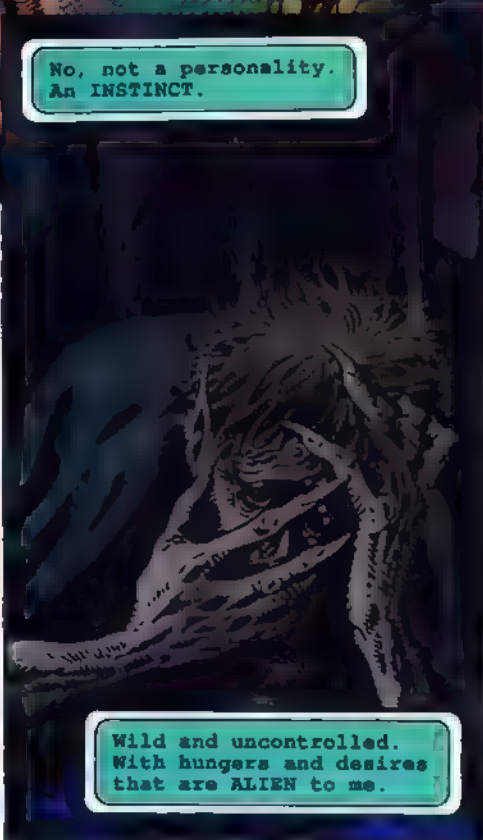
When it will END, I can only wonder.

And what will be left
of Kirk Langstrom
when the process is
over?

No, not a personality.
An INSTINCT.



Already my personality
surrenders to another...



Wild and uncontrolled.
With hungers and desires
that are ALIEN to me.



And the
blackouts
come with
greater
frequency.



MASTER BRUCE!

I'M ALL RIGHT, ALFRED.

YOU MOST CERTAINLY ARE NOT.



YOU RECEIVED A SEVERE CONCUSSION IN THAT FALL WITH THOSE IDIOTIC BIRDWINGS.

BATWINGS, ALFRED.

I AM SORRY, SIR.

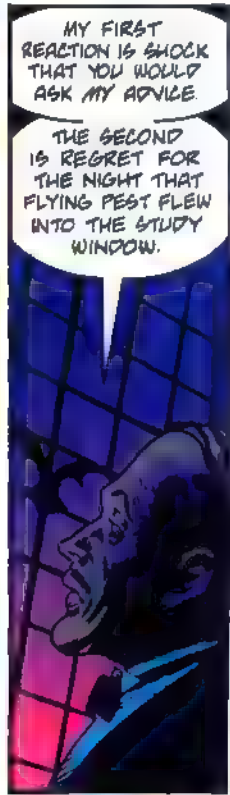
WE MUST BE SPECIFIC WITH THE DETAILS OF OUR NEUROSIS.



HAVE TO SHAKE THIS OFF THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE. THE RIDGERUNNERS HIT THE SKYBOXES AT THE GOTHAMDOOME LAST NIGHT.

HAS TO BE A WAY TO GET AN EDGE ON THEM. WHAT DO YOU THINK, ALFRED?

Hum.



MY FIRST REACTION IS SHOCK THAT YOU WOULD ASK MY ADVICE.

THE SECOND IS REGRET FOR THE NIGHT THAT FLYING PEST FLEW INTO THE STUDY WINDOW.

Another blackout.

Strange sounds. I've left the apartment.



Dear god. Is
this what I
have become?

More animal
than man.

When will the surren-
der be complete?

AN' WHEN
YER THROUGH
THERE...

I GOT
ANOTHER
JOB FOR
YA.

YEAH.
YEAH.

When will I black out,
never to return again?

DO
SUMPIN' ABOUT
THE RATS OUT
HERE.

YEAH.
YEAH.

When will I be more
feral than human?

And will I
REMEMBER
that I was
ever Kirk
Langstrom?





YOU WANNA
QUIET ROOM? CHECK INTO THE
MARLTON PLAZA.

JUST
TELL THEM TO
TURN DOWN THEIR
TELEVISION,
PLEASE



I'LL DO WHAT
I--

Awwwweeeek!

I
TOLD YOU, NO
PETS!

Pain in my joints
as they lengthen.

Sounds are starting to
turn to echo patterns.

Can "see" the room when
I close my eyes.

Skin toughening.
Spine arching.

So far away.

So far.



THIS IS EVERYTHING, FRANCINE?

EVERYTHING THAT WAS ON HIS LAPTOP, DAVE.

IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN--

HA!

LANGSTROM WAS SO TORN UP BY THE BOARD VETOING HIS CRACKPOT GRAND REQUEST THAT HE WENT OVER THE EDGE.

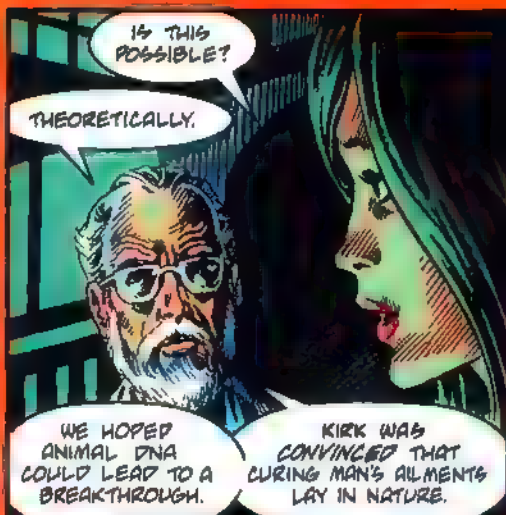


HE'S WORKED ON HIS BAT GENOME PROJECT SO LONG HE THINKS HE IS A BAT!

DARYL!

IS THIS POSSIBLE?

THEORETICALLY.



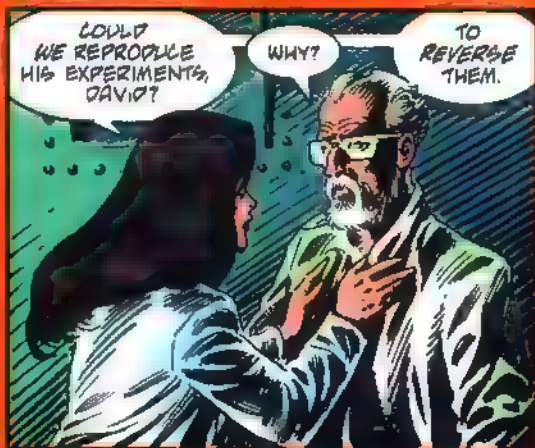
WE HOPED ANIMAL DNA COULD LEAD TO A BREAKTHROUGH.

KIRK WAS CONVINCED THAT CURING MAN'S AILMENTS LAY IN NATURE.

COULD WE REPRODUCE HIS EXPERIMENTS, DAVE?

WHY?

TO REVERSE THEM.



YOU'RE BOTH LOSING YOUR MINDS!

IS THERE MORE?

HIS DIARY..





I can't go back.

And I live in fear of
what lies ahead.



I can't be
Kirk Langstrom.
I can't even
be a man.

So I choose to
end it all.

I go to my death
while I still
have a choice in
the matter.



NO...

A strange guise
I chose

An animal whose reputation far
outdistances any real threat
it poses.

I can imagine Alfred's comments
on that last statement

But I only borrow
the fearsome image
of the bat.

Try as I may, I'll never know
the feeling of being a true
creature of the night

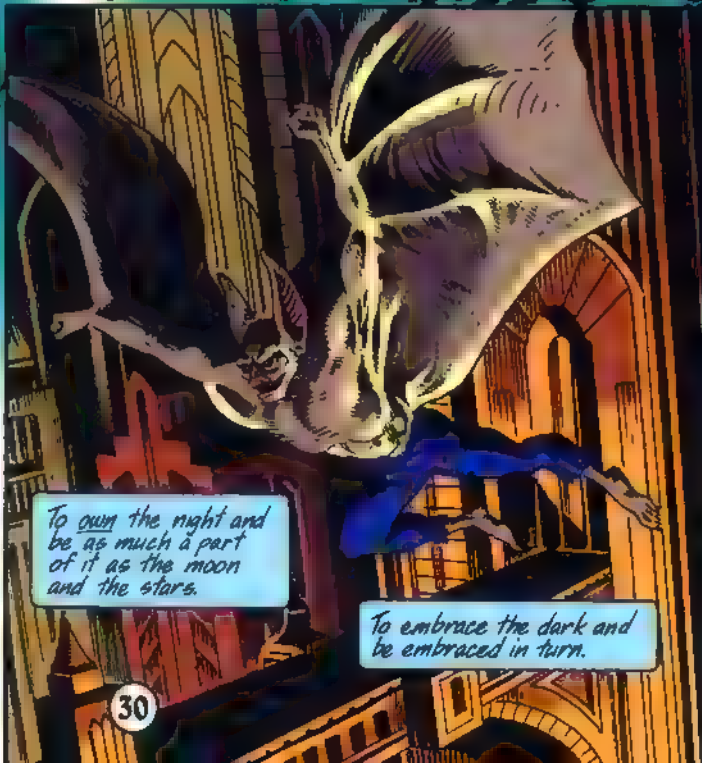
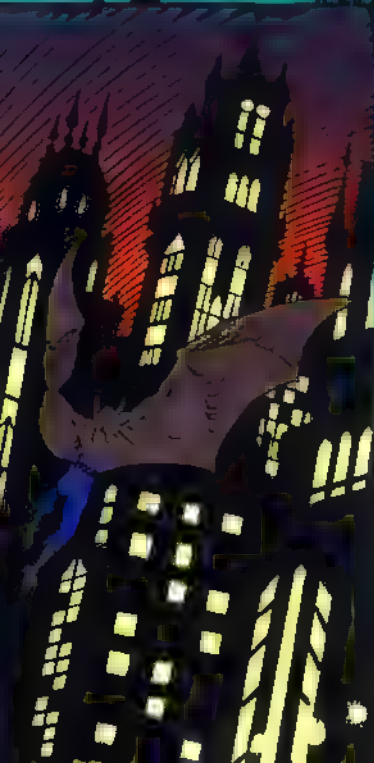
The dark winds
against my skin.



*To feel my wings fill
with cold air*

*To feel my body lifted into
the sky by the power of
my own wings.*

*To feel the dizzying
freedom of flight.*



*To own the night and
be as much a part
of it as the moon
and the stars.*

*To embrace the dark and
be embraced in turn.*



*But I do
all right
anyway.*



*The world premiere of
Paragon Pictures'
latest release.*

*Just the sort
of plum the
ridgerunners
would go for.*



A large comic book panel showing Batman in his suit, crouched on a rooftop. He is looking down at a thief who is lying on his back, seemingly unconscious or dead. The thief is wearing a dark jacket and a hat. In the background, there are city buildings and a red light source, possibly a fire or a sunset.

They came to steal the premiere print of the film.

The only final cut of the movie in existence.

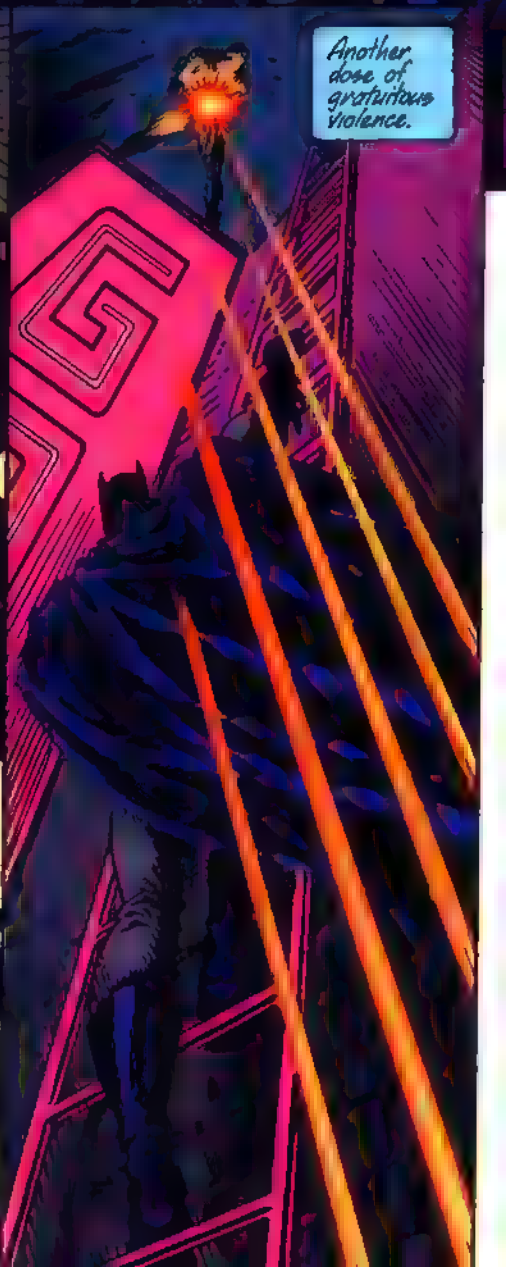
A comic book panel showing Batman in flight, moving from left to right. He is wearing his iconic suit and mask. The background is a bright yellow and orange sky with dark, swirling clouds. The panel is framed by a thick black border.

Worth millions to video pirates.

Or maybe they'll ransom it. The studio would pay dear.

A comic book panel showing Batman in flight, moving from left to right. He is wearing his iconic suit and mask. The background is a bright yellow and orange sky with dark, swirling clouds. The panel is framed by a thick black border.

The movie's just what the world needs.

A comic book panel showing Batman in flight, moving from left to right. He is wearing his iconic suit and mask. The background is a bright yellow and orange sky with dark, swirling clouds. The panel is framed by a thick black border.

Another dose of gratuitous violence.



A large, dramatic comic book panel. On the left, the Penguin is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He has a large, balding head with a prominent nose and a small tuft of hair. He is wearing a dark, high-collared coat. On the right, Batman is seen from the chest up, wearing his iconic blue and black suit with a yellow bat emblem on the chest. He is looking down at the Penguin. The background is dark with several bright red laser beams crisscrossing the scene. There are also some yellow, starburst-like light effects.

They win again.

They surprised me. This is the first time they've resorted to guns.



A large, dramatic comic book panel. On the left, the Penguin is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He has a large, balding head with a prominent nose and a small tuft of hair. He is wearing a dark, high-collared coat. On the right, Batman is seen from the chest up, wearing his iconic blue and black suit with a yellow bat emblem on the chest. He is looking down at the Penguin. The background is dark with several bright red laser beams crisscrossing the scene. There are also some yellow, starburst-like light effects.

It just means they're intent on staying ahead of me.

HE'S
AXED! I AXED THE
BATMAN!

GOOD
FOR YOU.
LET'S
JET!

HE'S
WAXED,
MAN.
I--

Huh?

HOW'D
WE--?

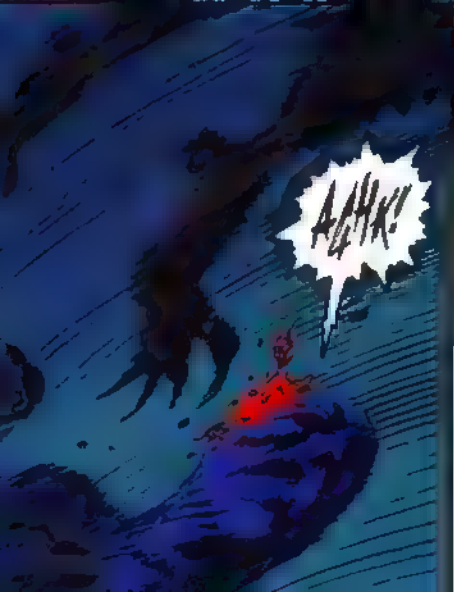


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It just means I have them spooked.



I
KILLED YOU!
I SAW YOU
FALL!



AAHHK!



Something new.

A man in a flying suit...

...like my own?



HEY,
FALLY'S
NOT WITH
US!

SCREW HIM!
YOU WANNA WAIT UP
FOR HIM?

SAY HI
TO BATMAN
FOR ME!

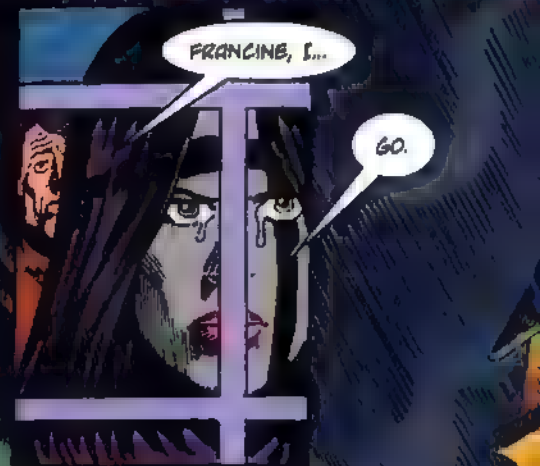
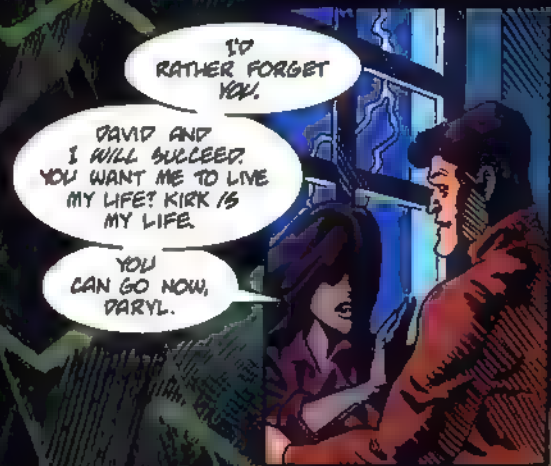


oh
man...



DAMN!







VERY HEARTENING TO HAVE SUCH A CROWD FOR MY OUTDOOR LECTURE ON THE ARTIBELIS LITURATUS.

THE FRUIT BAT TO MY NEW STUDENTS.



I'D LIKE TO THINK THIS SUDDEN INTEREST IN NOCTURNAL FLYING MAMMALS...

...WAS DUE TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN THIS BATMAN CHARACTER...



IN ANY CASE THIS IS A PERFECT NIGHT TO SPOT SWARMS LIKE THE ONE OVERHEAD.

IN THE EARLY EVENING BATS WILL GATHER FROM AS FAR AS TWENTY MILES AWAY TO FORM THESE SWARMS BEFORE SEPARATION FOR THE NIGHT'S HUNT

OFTEN THEY WILL MINGLE AROUND A SOURCE OF WATER LIKE THE RESERVOIR BELOW.

"THEY WILL GATHER AGAIN AT DAWN BEFORE BREAKING UP AND HEADING TOWARD THEIR RESPECTIVE DIURNAL RESTING PLACES EAVES, BELL TOWERS AND CAVES."

"THE SWARM IS NOT RANDOM.
IT IS A TIGHTLY CONFEDERATED
FAMILY



"EACH MEMBER HAS A
DUTY TO PERFORM IN
PERPETUATING THE
SPECIES.

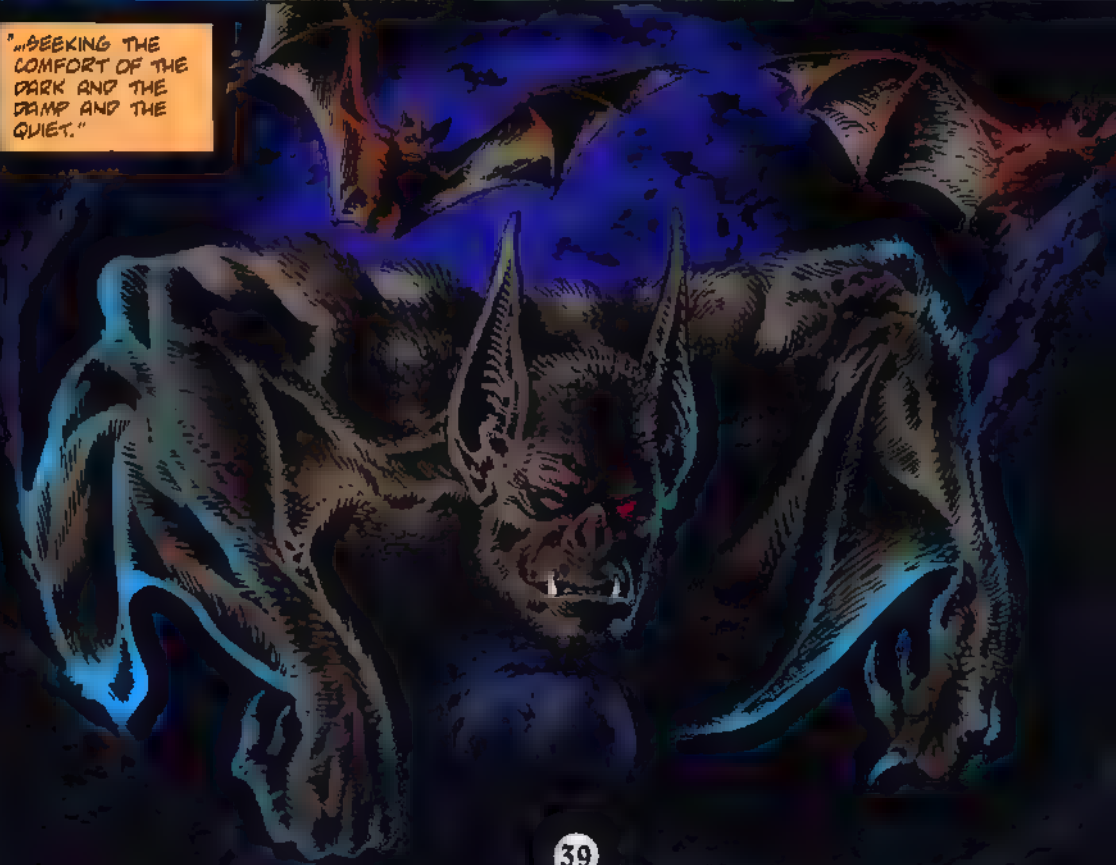


"AND THE CAVES AND
CREVASSES IN WHICH
THEY LIVE ARE LIKE
ANCESTRAL HOMES.

"GENERATION UPON
GENERATION OF BATS
CLAIM THEM."



"SEEKING THE
COMFORT OF THE
DARK AND THE
DAMP AND THE
QUIET."



"WHAT DRAWS THEM TO ONE HAVEN OVER ANOTHER IS UNKNOWN."

"TRUTH TO TELL, THERE IS FAR MORE WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE BAT THAN WHAT IS CATALOGUED BY MYSELF OR OTHER EXPERTS."

"EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM IS A NEAR TOTAL MYSTERY."









*The creature I saw weeks ago when the
ridgerunners were brought down.*

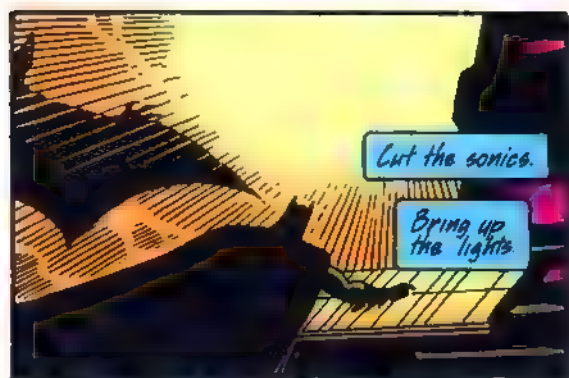
I'd begun to think I'd imagined it

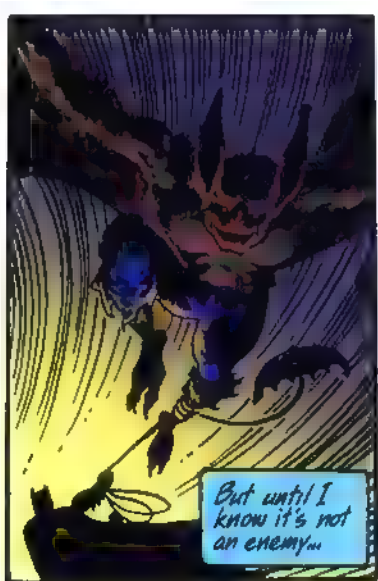
I'd lost hope I'd ever see it again.



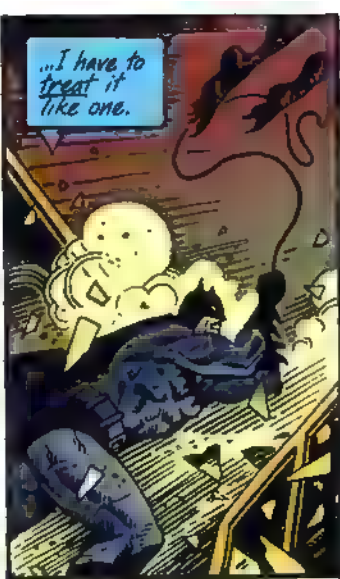
I never thought I would find it here.

*But if any living thing could find
the cave, it would be this one.*





*But until I
know it's not
an enemy...*



*...I have to
treat it
like one.*



*Its strength is
tremendous.*



*So it's not just a man in
a grotesque disguise.*

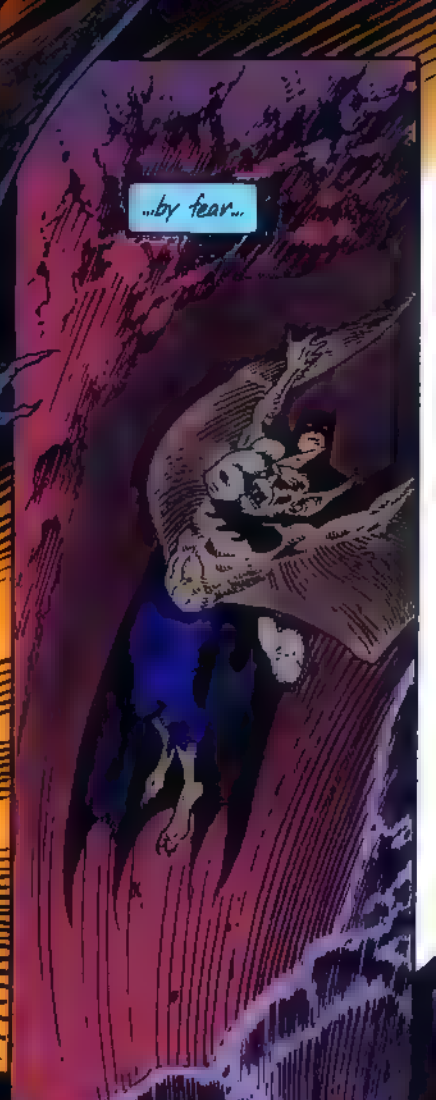
*Animal or man, it's invaded
my lair.*



*Animal or man,
I can't allow it
to escape.*



The Man-Bat's strength
seems doubled...



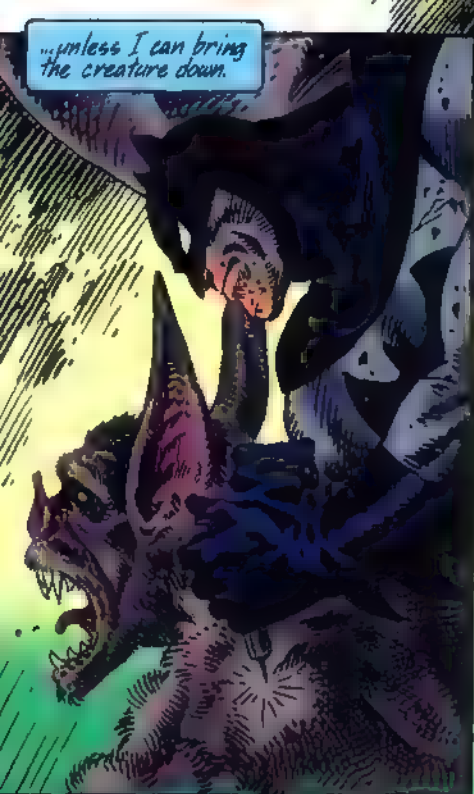
...by fear...



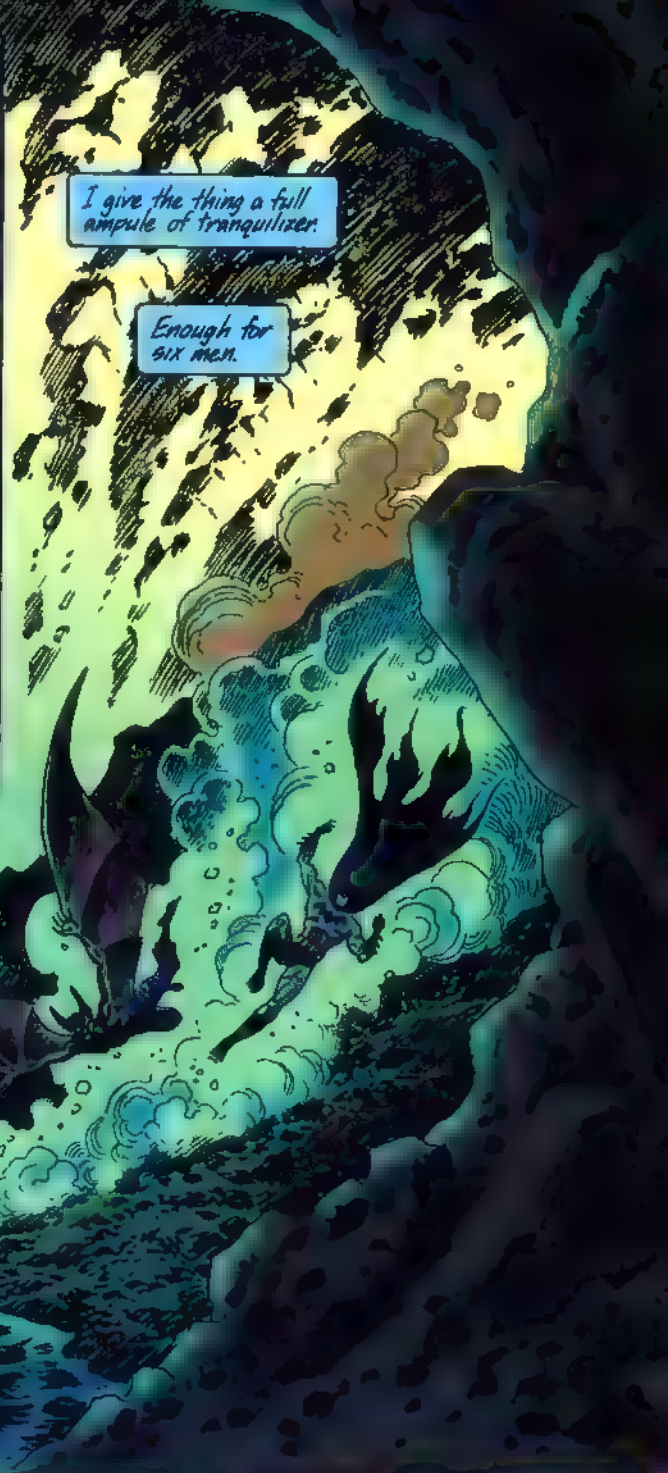
...by rage...



In either
case I'm a
dead man...

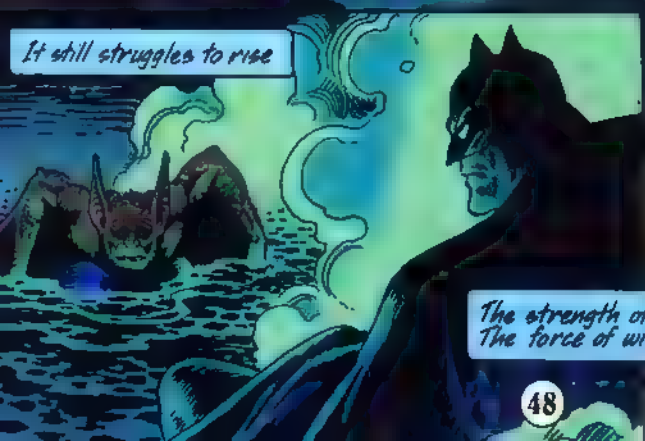
A close-up of Batman's face as he looks down at a defeated, dark, bat-like creature. The creature has its mouth open, showing sharp teeth.

...unless I can bring
the creature down.

A large panel showing Batman injecting a dark, bat-like creature with a syringe. The creature is lying on the ground, and a large splash of liquid is visible. The background is dark and rocky.

I give the thing a full
ampule of tranquilizer.

Enough for
six men.

A panel showing Batman looking at a creature in the water. The creature is dark and bat-like, with its mouth open. The water is dark and turbulent.

It still struggles to rise

A panel showing Batman looking at a creature in the water. The creature is dark and bat-like, with its mouth open. The water is dark and turbulent.

I feel an odd
kinship to it.

The strength of it.
The force of will.

I sense a tragedy about the creature that mirrors my own

YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THIS ANIMAL WAS ONCE A MAN?

HIS NAME WAS... IS KIRK LANGSTROM.

I TOOK ITS FINGERPRINTS AND USED THE COMPUTER TO MAKE EXTRAPOLATED MODELS OF WHAT THOSE PRINTS WOULD BE IF IT WERE HUMAN.

LANGSTROM WORKED AT FEDERAL TESTING LABS WHEN HE WAS IN COLLEGE. I FOUND A MATCH IN THEIR FILES.

BUT WHAT LED YOU TO BELIEVE THIS WAS EVER HUMAN?

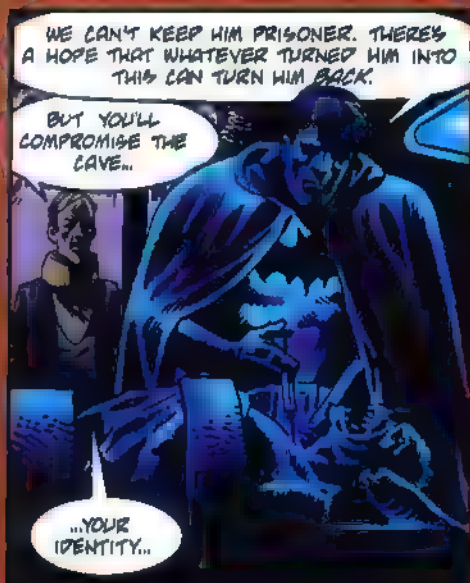
THIS.

Dr. Francine Evelyn Lee
and
Dr. Robert Kirkland Langstrom
are pleased to announce their
engagement to be

IT WAS STUCK IN THE PANTS I CUT OFF HIM

QUITE THE BRIDE-GROOM THIS ONE WOULD MAKE.

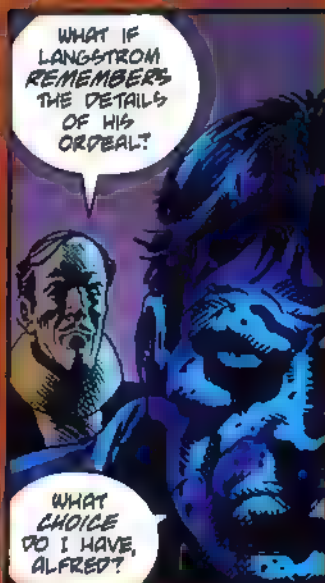
HE SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO BE ONE, ALFRED



WE CAN'T KEEP HIM PRISONER. THERE'S A HOPE THAT WHATEVER TURNED HIM INTO THIS CAN TURN HIM BACK.

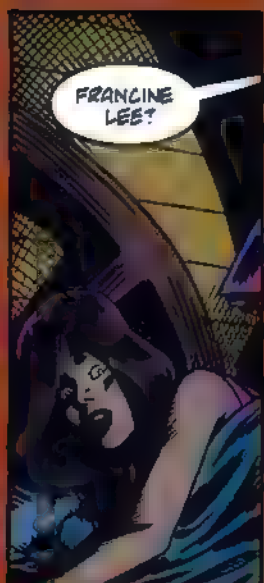
BUT YOU'LL COMPROMISE THE CAVE...

...YOUR IDENTITY...

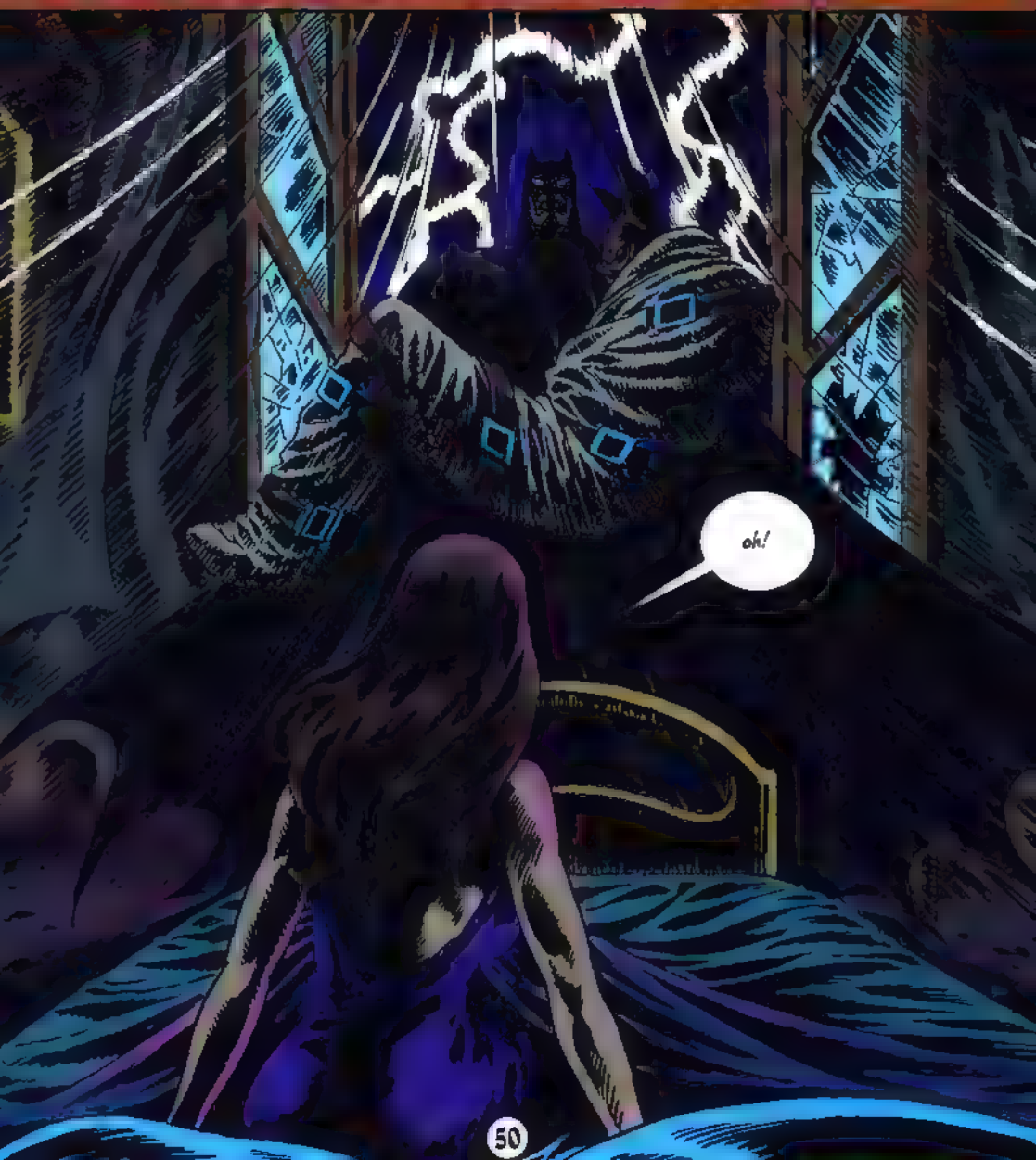


WHAT IF LANGSTROM REMEMBERS THE DETAILS OF HIS ORDEAL?

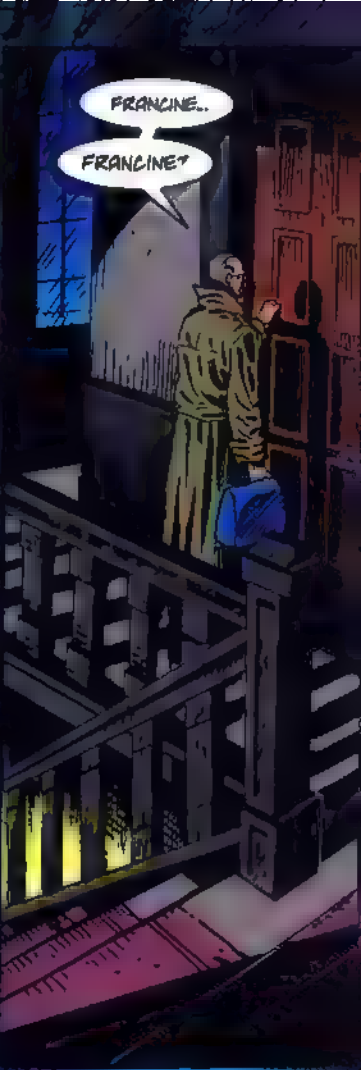
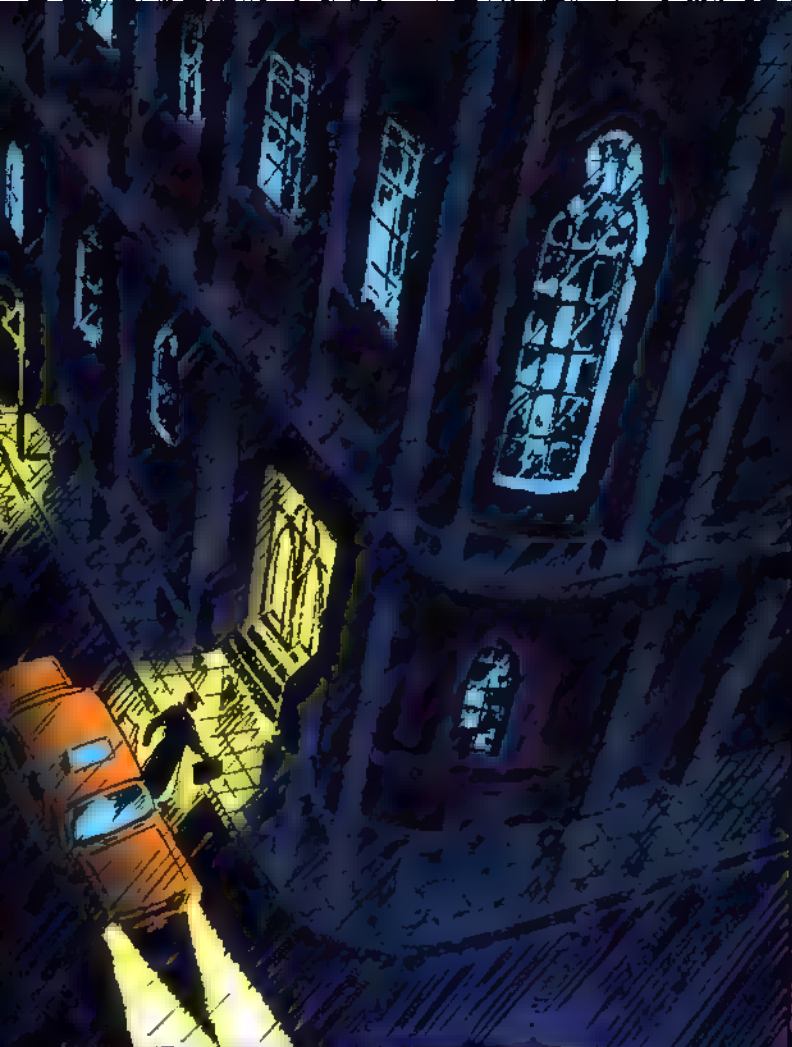
WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE, ALFRED?



FRANCINE LEE?



oh!



DID YOU BRING IT?

WHY DO YOU WANT IT AT THIS HOUR? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

JUST GIVE IT TO ME.



HAS KIRK COME BACK? FRANCINE. HAS---

PLEASE, DAVID. DON'T ASK. WHATEVER YOU DO...



...DON'T EVER ASK.



Never suspected those claws could
tear reinforced canvas—



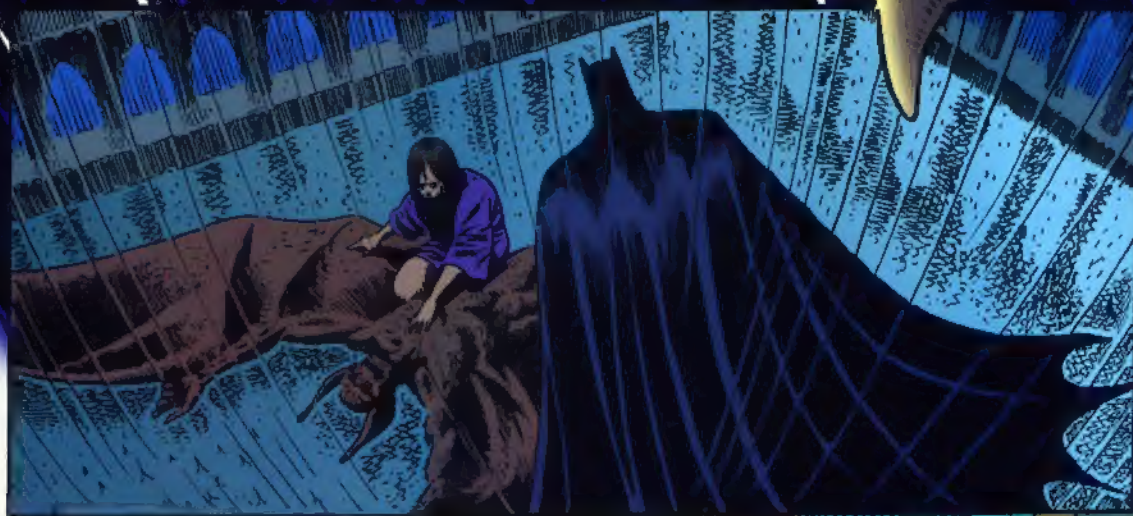
—as easily as they
do flesh.



KIRK!









YOU KNOW
I CAN'T STAND TO GO
UNSHAVEN.

IT DIDN'T
BOTHER YOU A
FEW WEEKS
AGO.

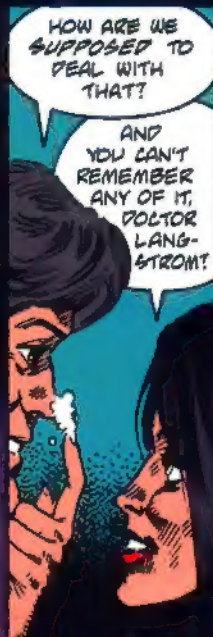
HA.
HA.



I CAN'T BELIEVE
WE JOKE ABOUT IT
NOW.

BECAUSE
IT'S ALL SO UN-
BELIEVABLE.

I SPENT
NINE MONTHS AS A
GIANT FLYING
RODENT.



HOW ARE WE
SUPPOSED TO
DEAL WITH
THAT?

AND
YOU CAN'T
REMEMBER
ANY OF IT,
DOCTOR
LANG-
STROM?



NOT A SECOND OF IT,
DOCTOR LANGSTROM.

IT'S ALL A
TOTAL BLANK TO
ME...

"...AND IT'S BEST
THAT WAY.

"SOME THINGS WE'RE BETTER
OFF NOT KNOWING."



DIXON-
GLEATENA

*Dedicated to the memory of
Frank Robbins
who first gave us the Man-Bat.*